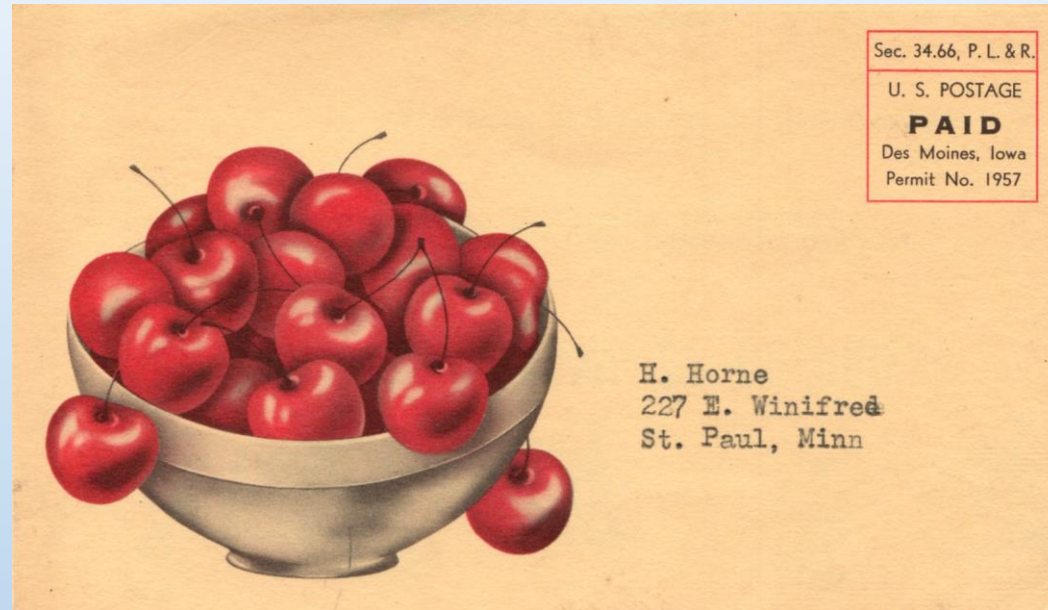


Life is Just a _____



[Bowl of Cherries]

Idioms Illustrated and Explained – Part VII Pot Luck (39 phrases)

by Tom Fortunato

idiom (n.)- an expression whose meaning can not be derived from its elements

How many times over the course of a day do you hear these? They're so common in our vernacular that we hardly take the time to recognize them with thousands in the English language alone. A few are presented here using a wide variety of material found mostly in dealer junk boxes. Don't expect to find philatelic rarities, but you will see some interesting items.

Most important is your participation! This presentation is in "fill in the blank" game format. You'll see a partial phrase at the top of each page related to the item shown along with a clue to the idiom's meaning. Just complete the phrase and keep track of your number right and wrong.

PowerPoint users have 5 seconds before a 15 second timeclock counts down then "dings," by which time an answer must be given. PDF users play on the honor system! Clicking the next page reveals the answer along with details of the origins and meaning of the idiom. Ten references were used researching these. Not all agreed, but the majority plausible response appears here.

This is 1 of 7 thematic related parts (# phrases in each). Enjoy them all!

I – Animals (24) II – Food (14) III – Man (18) IV - Sports & Games (9)

V – Nature (25) VI – Music (8) VII - Pot Luck (39)

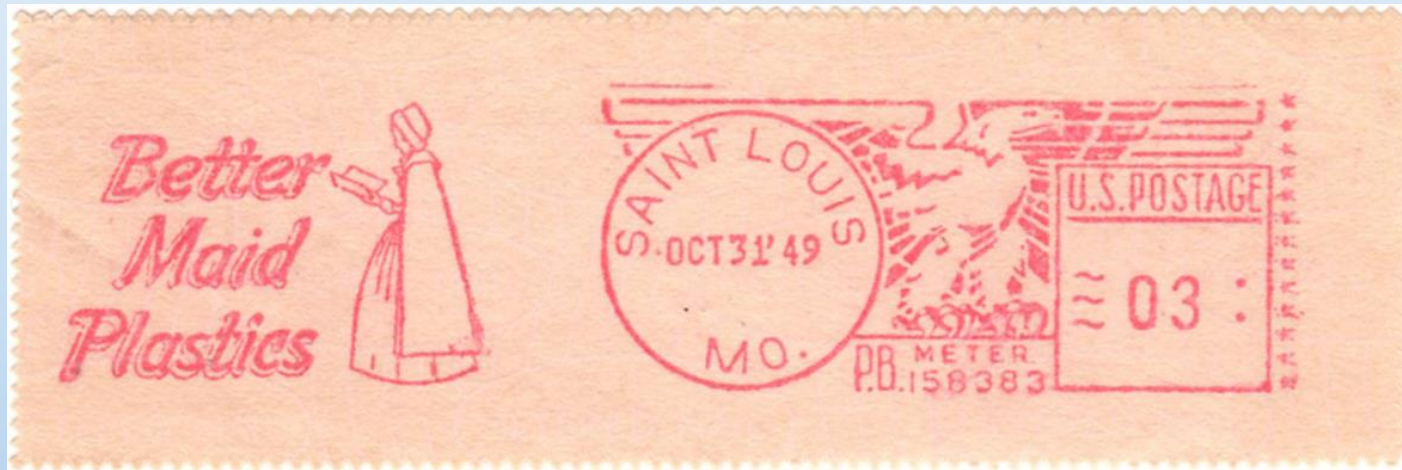
VII- Pot Luck _____ and dagger

- *spying*



VII- Pot Luck **cloak** and dagger

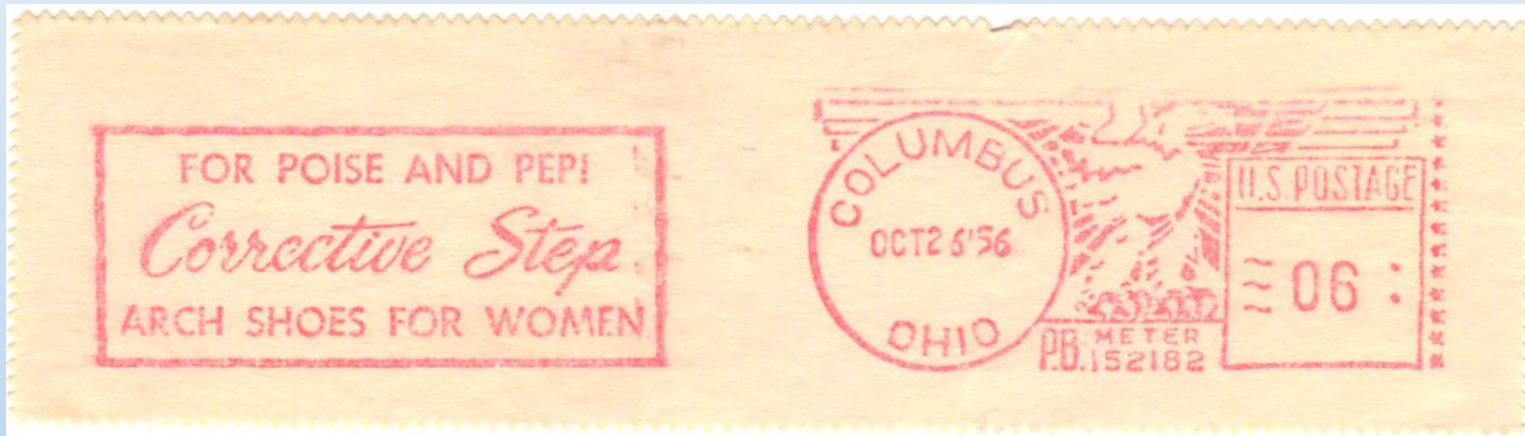
- *spying*



Originated with a 16th century phrase describing a genre of plays by Lope de Vega known as “cape and sword.” Plays in English were later known as “cloak and sword.”

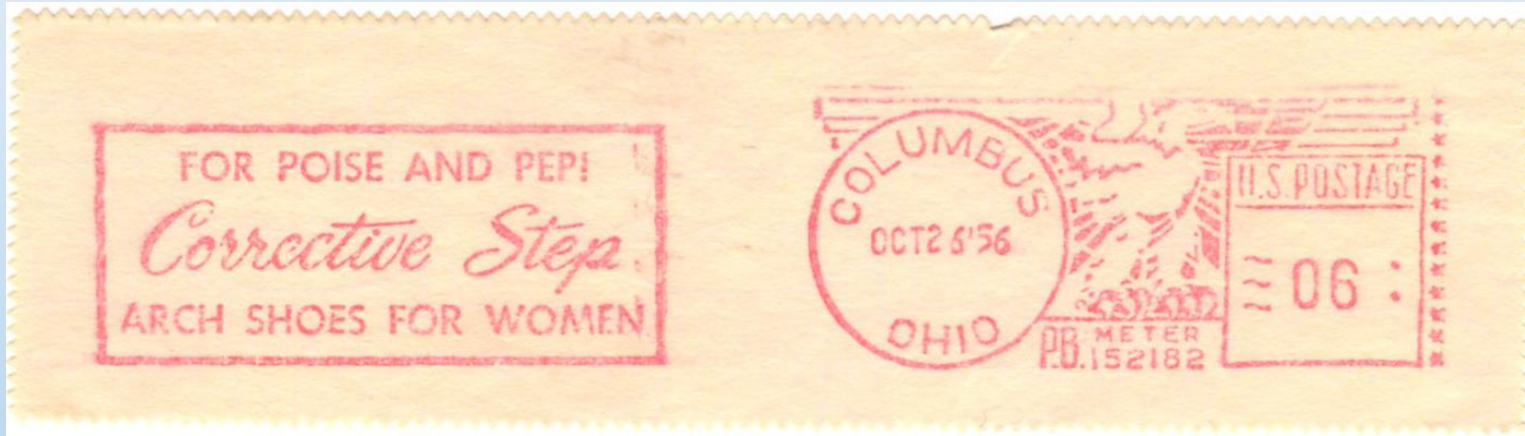
VII- Pot Luck waiting for the other _____

- *complete an action*



VII- Pot Luck waiting for the other shoe to drop

- *complete an action*



20th century American expression.

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VII- Pot Luck _____ in your cap

- *recognized achievement*



VII- Pot Luck **feather** in your cap

- *recognized achievement*



As recognition for killing an enemy, some countries presented feathers to servicemen who wore them in their hat. A 1657 catalog of British books notes, “Solomon’s Library was the feather in the plume of his glorious enjoyments.”

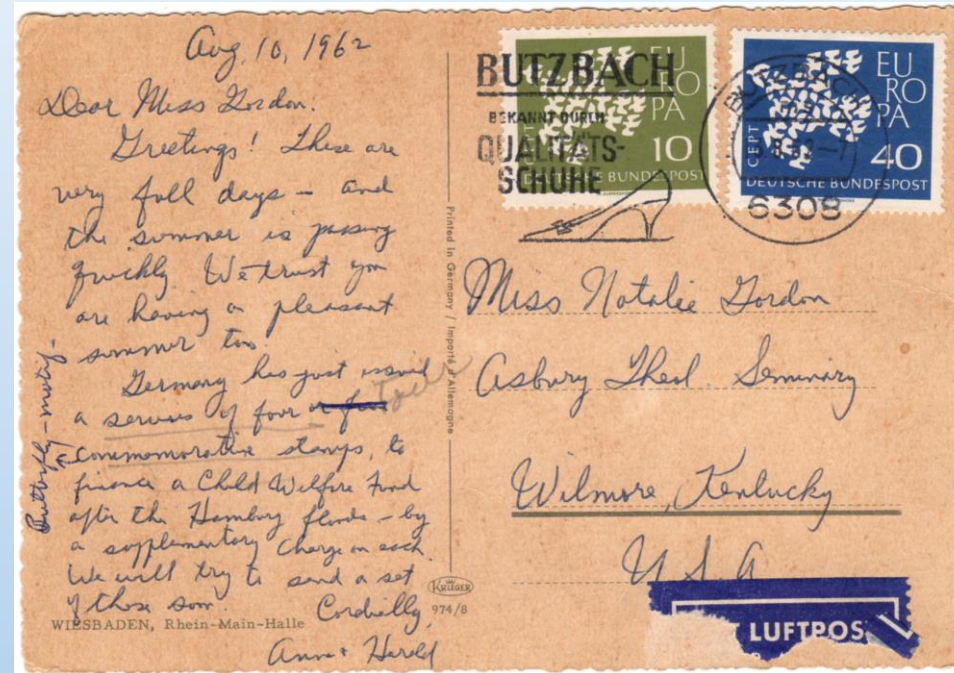
VII- Pot Luck head over

- *obsessed*



VII- Pot Luck head over heels

- *obsessed*



Know in the Latin writings of Catullus in 60 AD. The English variant, “heels over head” is seen in *Helenore* by Alexander Ross in 1768.

VII- Pot Luck you can bet _____

- *sure thing*



VII- Pot Luck you can bet **your boots**

- *sure thing*



Unknown origin.

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VII- Pot Luck Gravy _____

- *easy*



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VII- Pot Luck Gravy train

- *easy*

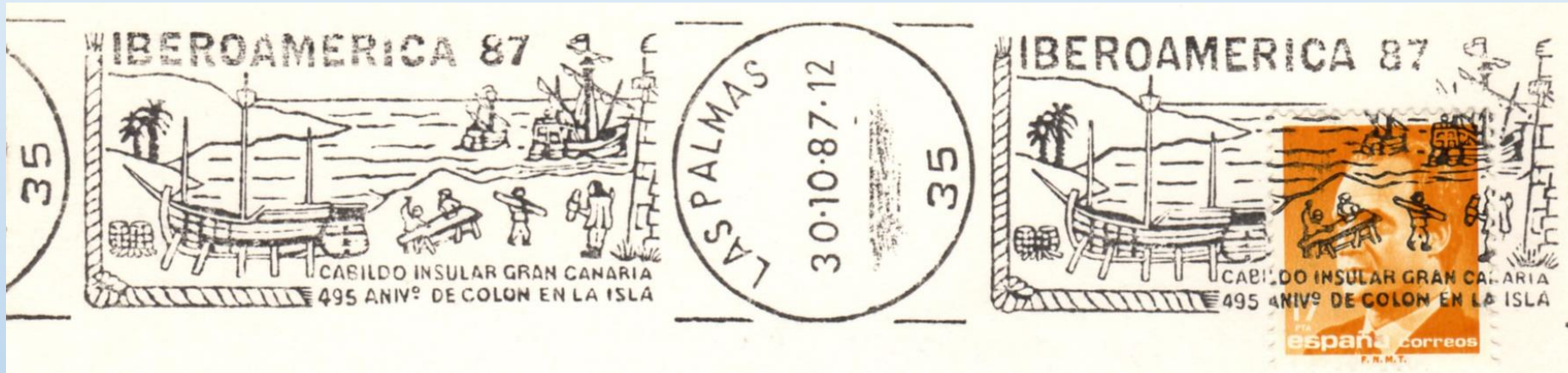


Probable railroading term for an easy trip. First in print in Benjamin Bodkin's 1945 *Lay May Burden Down*, "They is on the gravy train and don't know it."

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VII- Pot Luck In the _____

- *together in a difficult situation*

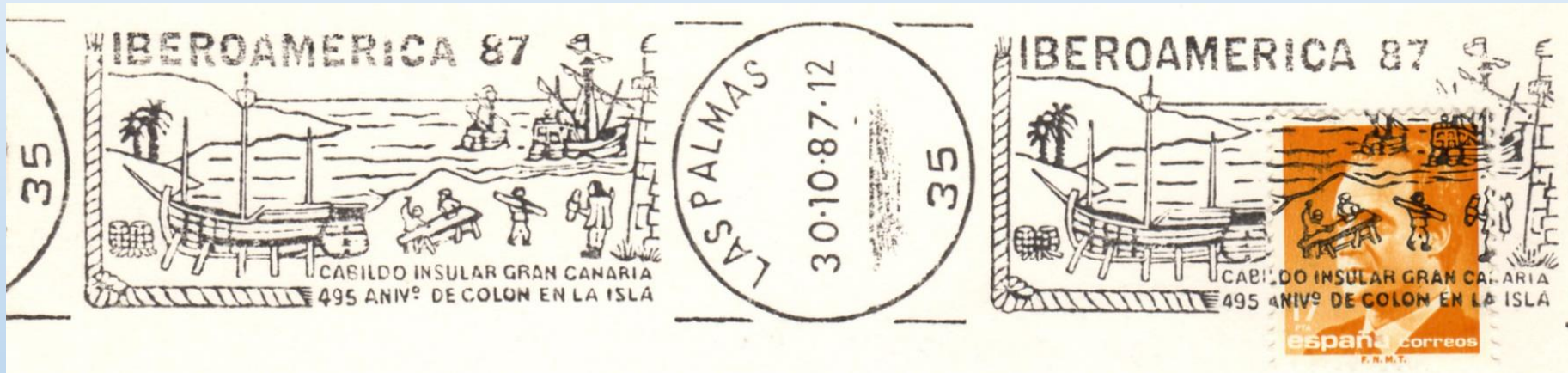


roller cancel

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VII- Pot Luck In the same boat

- *together in a difficult situation*



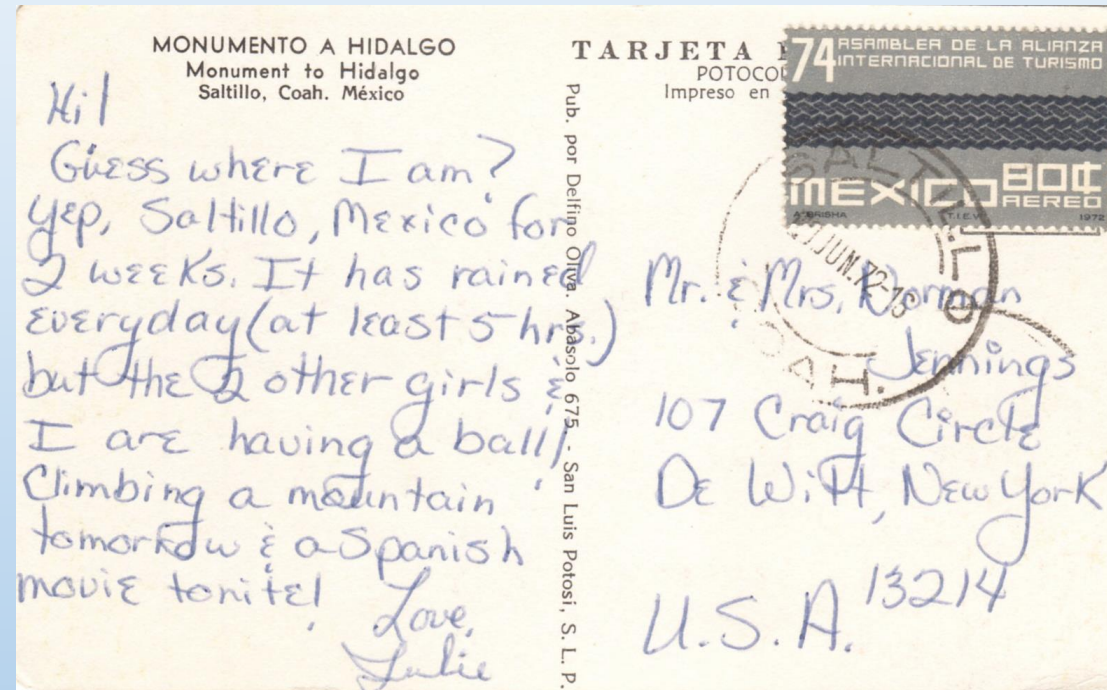
roller cancel

Ancient Greek phrase.

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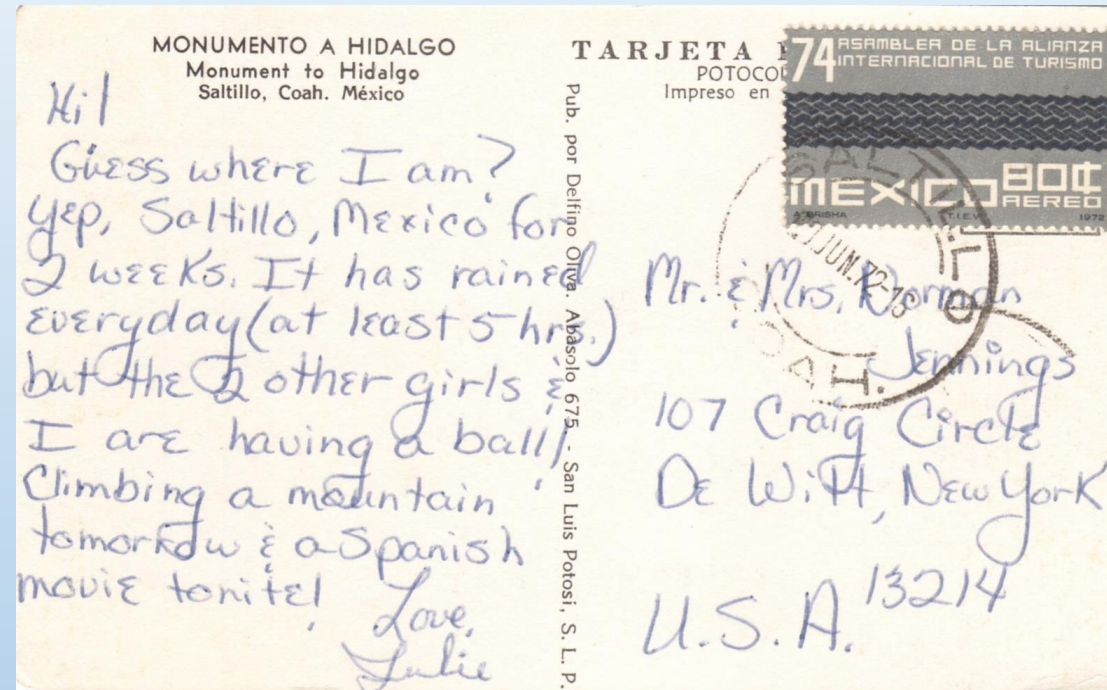
VII- Pot Luck off the _____

- *unusual, different*



VII- Pot Luck off the beaten track

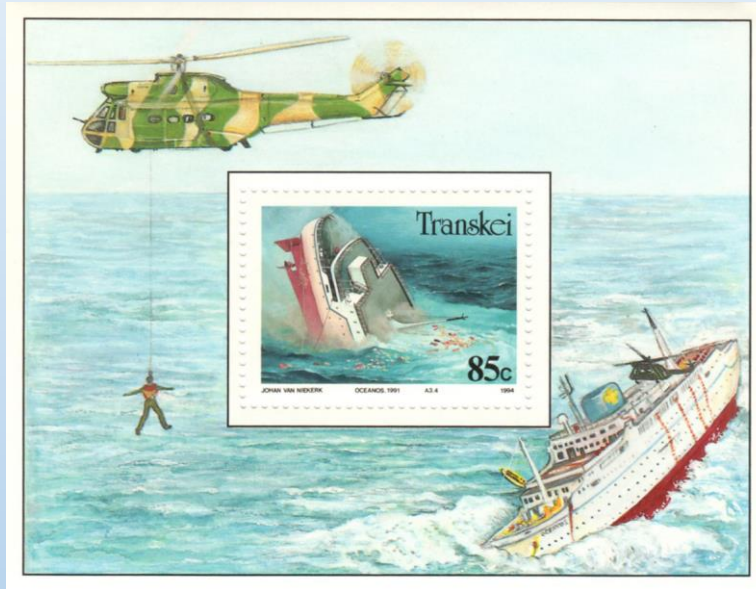
- *unusual, different*



Recorded in 1638's *The Painting of the Ancients* by Francis Junius, Jr.
"They propound unto us the right way, and not one usually beaten track only."

VII- Pot Luck don't rock _____

- *keep things as they are*



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VII- Pot Luck don't rock **the boat**

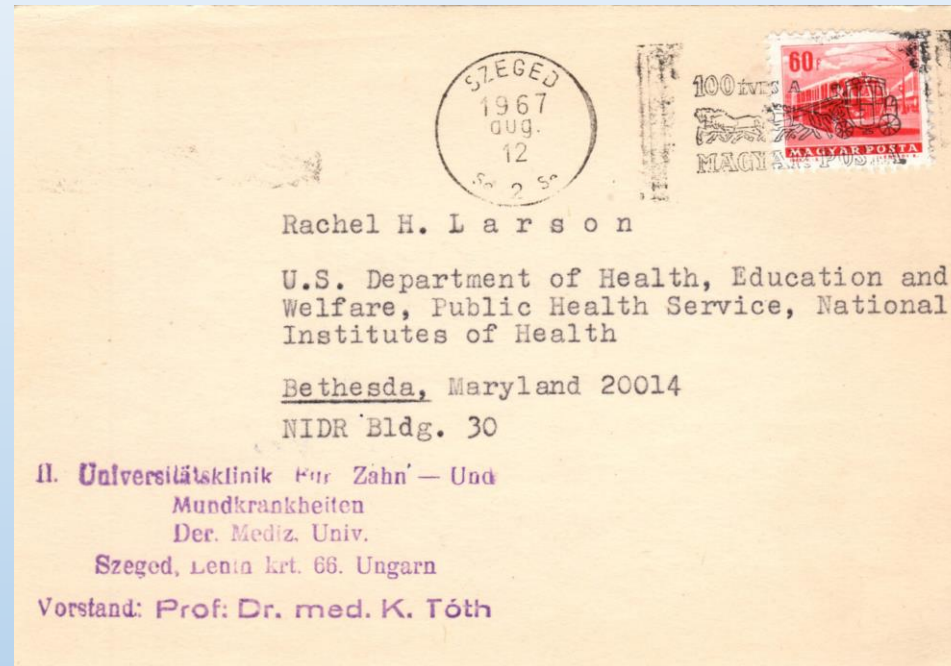
- *keep things as they are*



Boats are unstable in bad weather, or when small get tipsy when people move around. Found in the 1931 book *Only Yesterday* by Frederick Lewis Allen, “Unfortunate publicity had a tendency to rock the boat.”

VII- Pot Luck put the cart _____

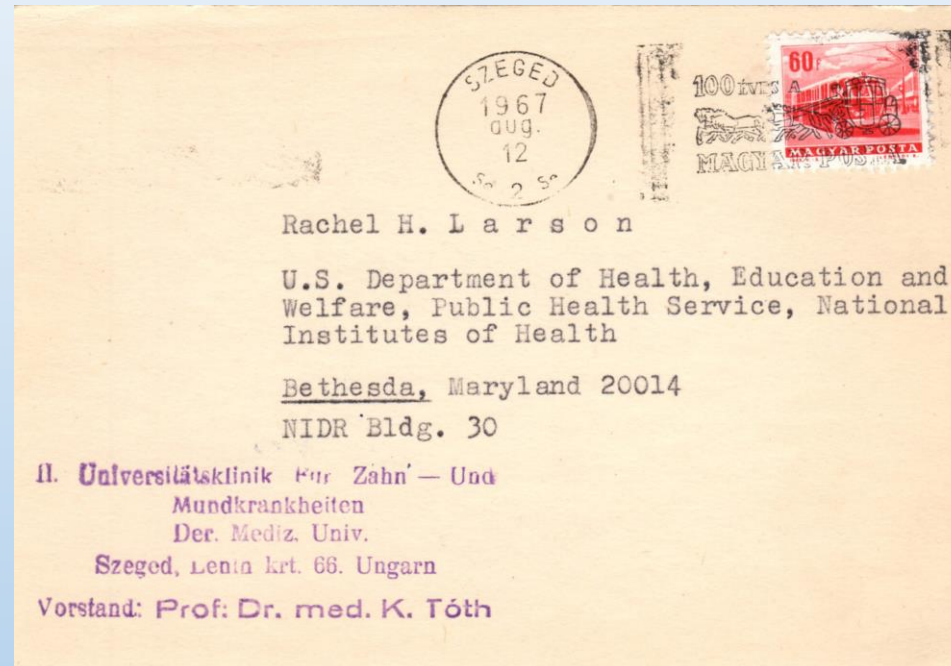
- *wrong priorities*



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VII- Pot Luck put the cart **before the horse**

- *wrong priorities*



Believed to have originated with Cicero. English variant seen in 1340 in *Remorse of Conscience*, “Many religious folk set the plow before the oxen.”

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VII- Pot Luck shape up or _____

- *improve or leave*



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VII- Pot Luck shape up or **ship out**

- *improve or leave*



American phrase used during World War II as an idiom threat to stateside soldiers who were told to do better or they would be shipped to a combat zone.

VII- Pot Luck miss _____

- *lose an opportunity*



VII- Pot Luck miss the boat

- *lose an opportunity*



From the early 20th century. If one literally missed the boat, there would be few options for a traveler.

VII- Pot Luck on _____

- *indecisive*



VII- Pot Luck on the fence

- *indecisive*

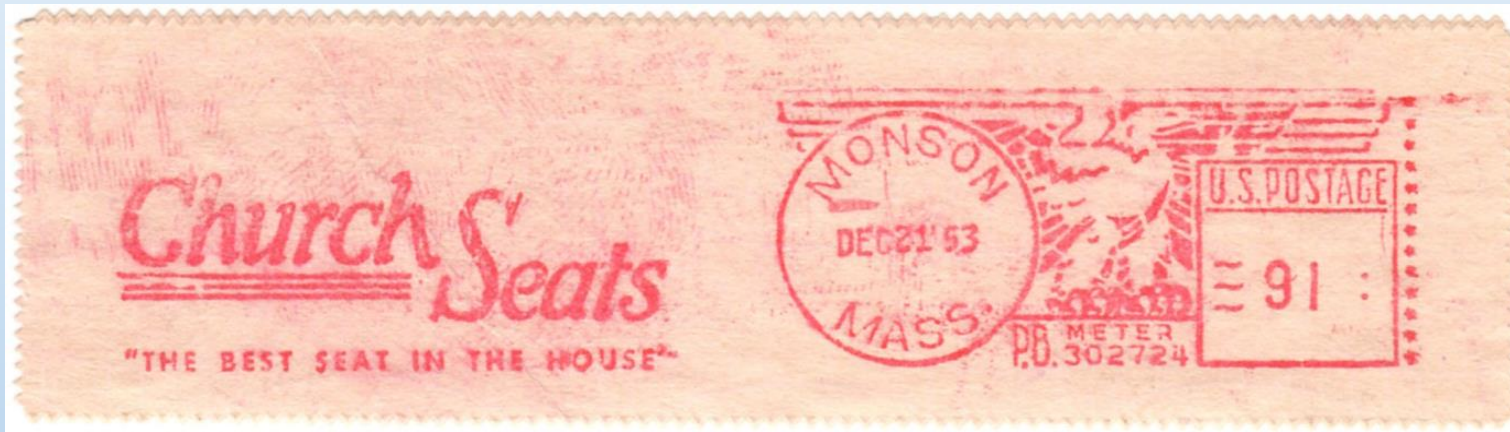


Used as early as August 13, 1828 in the Richmond Whig newspaper,
"There are certain Administration Editors, Editors for a long time on the fence, who occasionally undertake... to sit as censors upon their fatigued and dusty brethren."

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VII- Pot Luck take a _____

- *willingly be out of control*

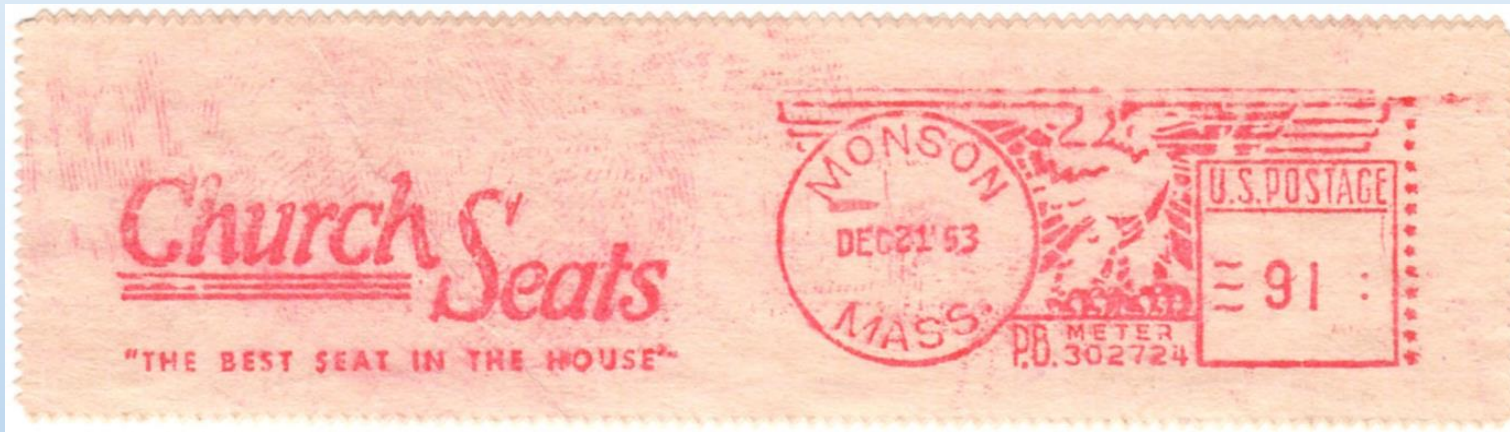


91 cent rate may have paid parcel post 5 lb. zone 7 rate, 30 cts +15.2 cts/additional pound



VII- Pot Luck take a back seat

- *willingly be out of control*



91 cent rate may have paid parcel post 5 lb. zone 7 rate, 30 cts +15.2 cts/additional pound

From America in the 1880's, as cars became popular, and drivers were in control.

VII- Pot Luck climb _____

- *restless, uneasy*

*Underpaid,
postage due, 8
yen paid the
domestic letter
rate, not
international
airmail rate*



VII- Pot Luck climb the wall

- *restless, uneasy*

*Underpaid,
postage due, 8
yen paid the
domestic letter
rate, not
international
airmail rate*



Mentioned in the Bible (Joel 2:7), as soldiers climbed walls of enemy fortifications.

VII- Pot Luck hold _____

- *continue in one's absence*



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VII- Pot Luck hold the fort

- *continue in one's absence*

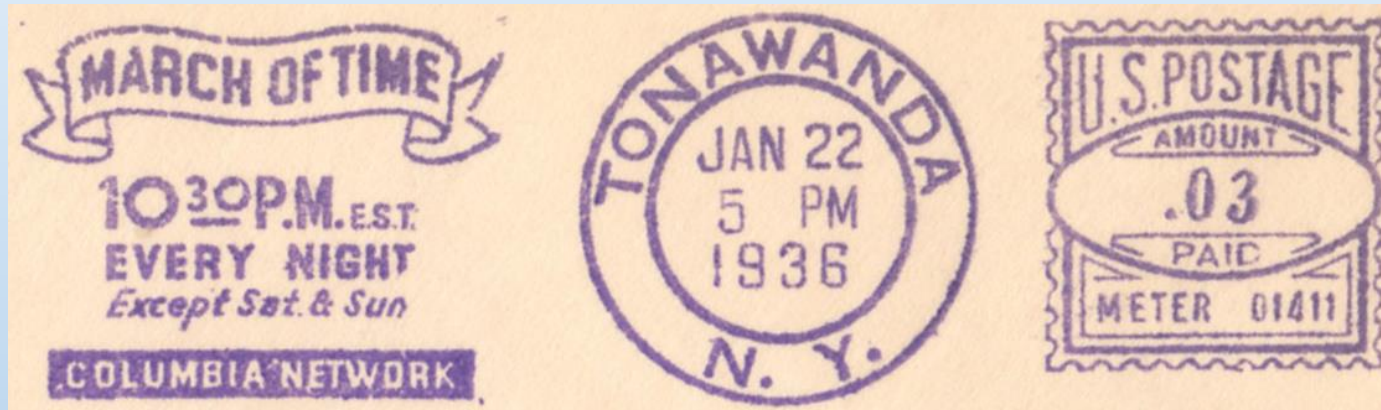


Originated with General Sherman in an 1864 Civil War battle near Kennesaw Mountain.

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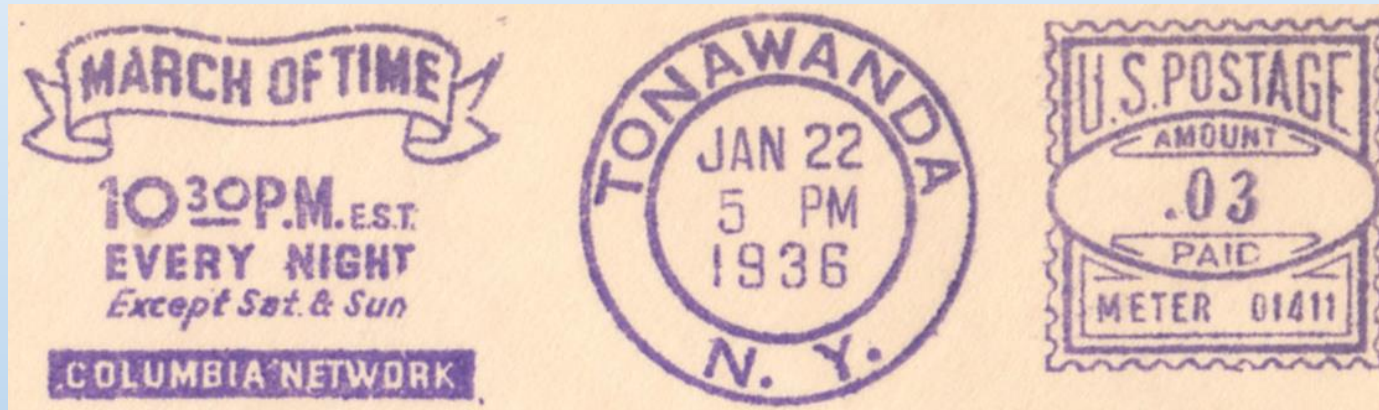
VII- Pot Luck bide your _____

- *wait for the right moment*



VII- Pot Luck bide your **time**

- *wait for the right moment*



Variants traced to 1230, but its current use is from 1850, in Frederick Robertson's *Sermons*, "They bide their time and then suddenly present themselves."

VII- Pot Luck make one turn over in his _____

- *disturbing event or idea*



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VII- Pot Luck make one turn over in his **grave**

- *disturbing event or idea*



Written of in James Payne's 1864 *Lost Sir Massingberg*, "This holiday making and mixture of high and low here, are themselves enough to make Sir Massingberg turn in his grave."

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VII- Pot Luck made in heaven

- *perfect match*



VII- Pot Luck a marriage made in heaven

- *perfect match*



Ancient proverb, adapted in 1576 in *The Palace of Pleasure* by William Painter, "Truth it is, that marriages be done in heaven and performed on earth."

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VII- Pot Luck at _____

- *gravely ill or sick*



VII- Pot Luck at death's door

- *gravely ill or sick*



Evolved from the 1382 Wyclif's Bible, "the gates of death."

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VII- Pot Luck raise _____

- *make trouble*



VII- Pot Luck raise the devil

- *make trouble*



From the mid 19th century. Similar to “raising hell.”

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VII- Pot Luck _____ at both ends

- *overworked*



VII- Pot Luck burn the candle at both ends

- *overworked*



Modern connotation appeared in the 1857 *Two Years Ago* by Charles Kingsley, "Frank Headly burnt the candle of life at both ends." Earlier noted in the 1730 *Dictionary of English* by Nathan Bailey.

VII- Pot Luck strike

- *act when the time is right*



VII- Pot Luck strike while the iron is hot

- *act when the time is right*



Referring to a blacksmith's work. Chaucer wrote in 1386, "While the iron is hot, men should smythe."

VII- Pot Luck you have a _____

- *crazy, nuts*



VII- Pot Luck you have a screw loose

- *crazy, nuts*



Literally refers to machines that made strange sounds if something was wrong. First used in the 1810 *Sporting Magazine*, “The others... had a screw loose.”

VII- Pot Luck get ____

- *lose one's job, fired*



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VII- Pot Luck get **the ax**

- *lose one's job, fired*



Later version of “get the sack.” Medieval workmen carried their tools in a bag from job to job. Written of in the 1576 *Common Conditions*, “This tinkerly trade, we give it the bag.”

VII- Pot Luck go _____

- *go away, leave alone*



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VII- Pot Luck go jump in the lake

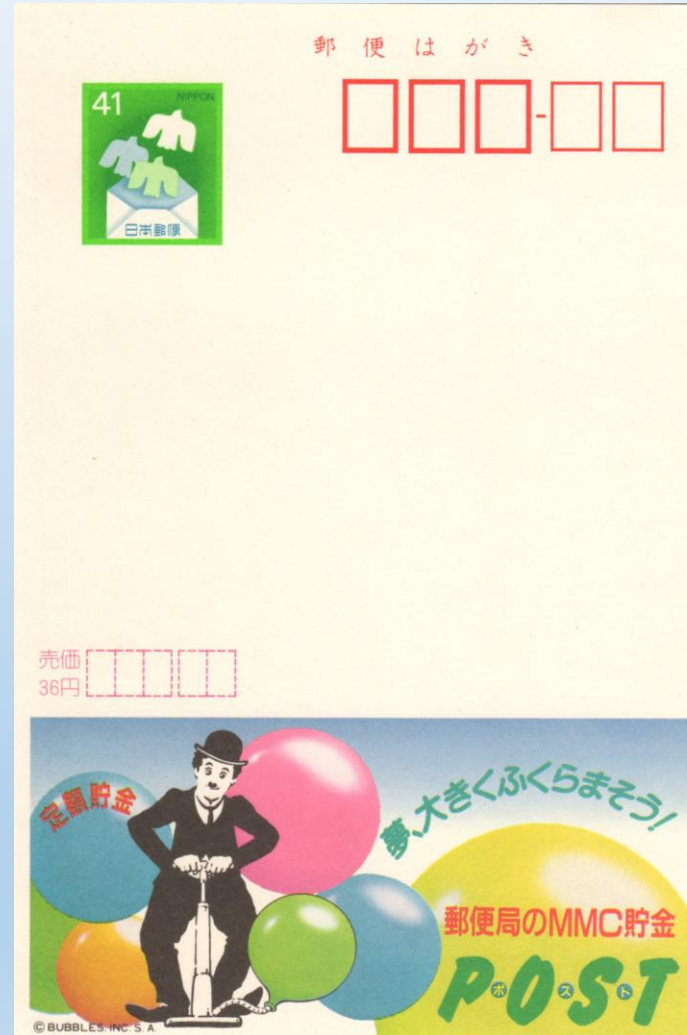
- *go away, leave alone*



Unknown origin, but with a similar meaning to “go fly a kite” and “go fry an egg.”

VII- Pot Luck go over like _____

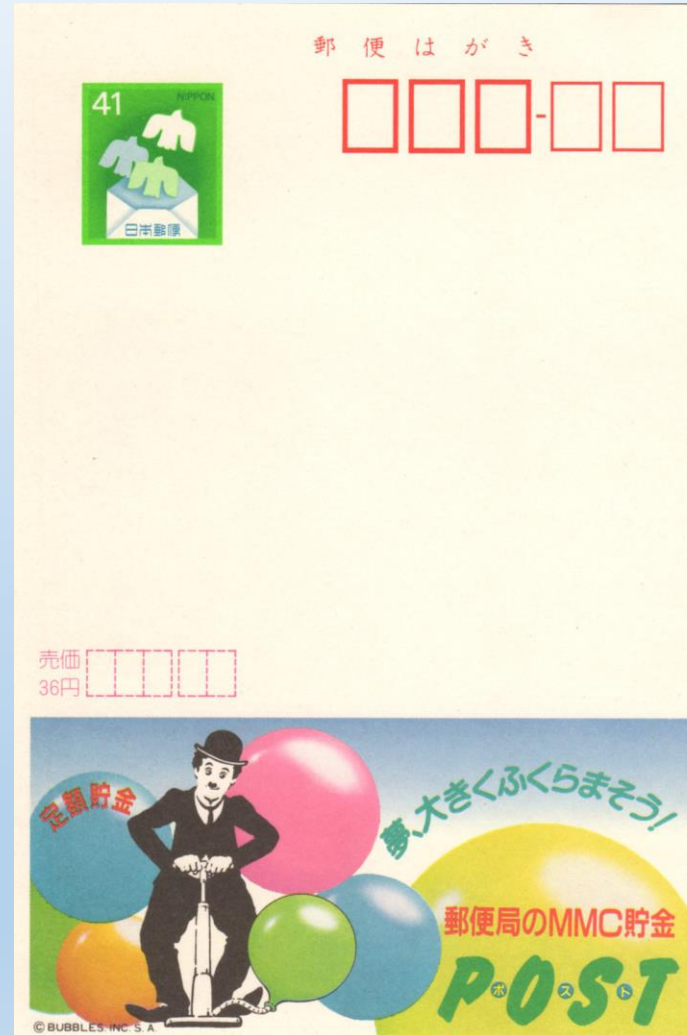
- *fail miserably*



VII- Pot Luck go over like a lead balloon

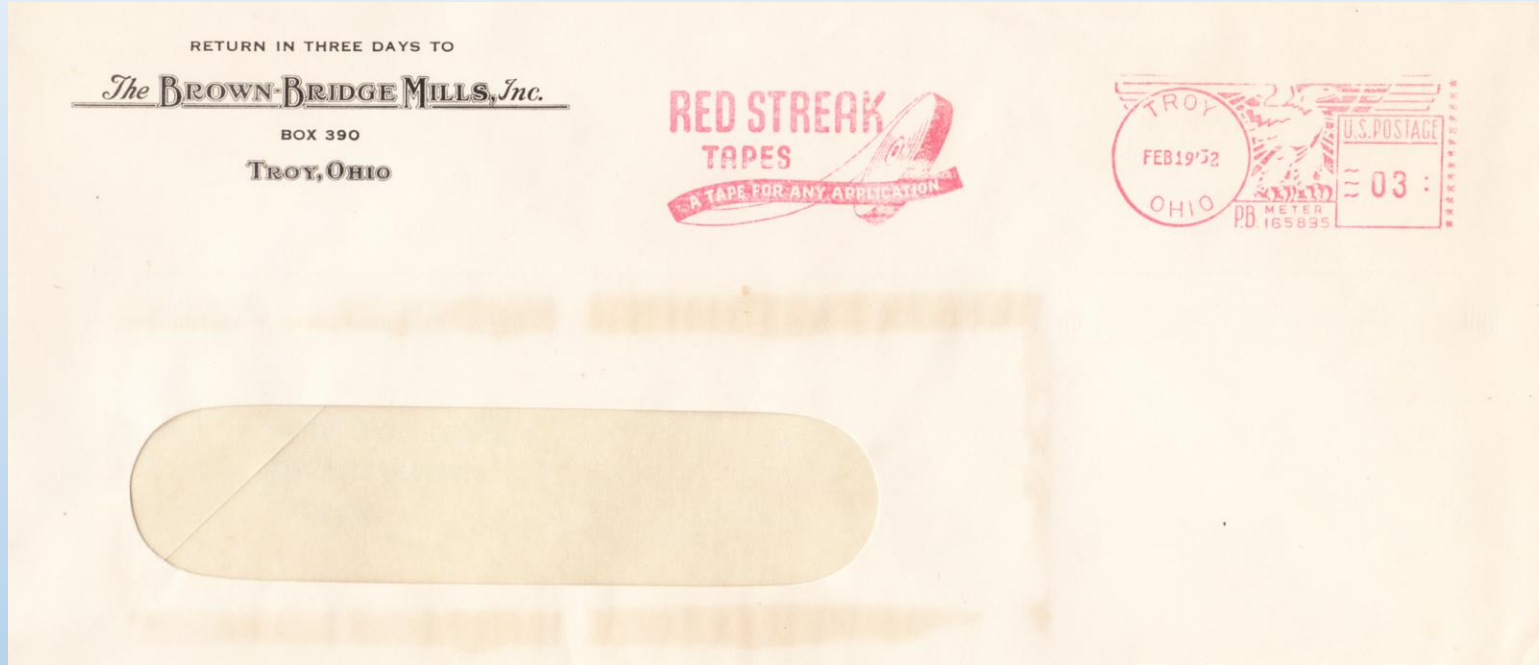
- *fail miserably*

20th century American expression, first used to describe a joke that “bombed.”



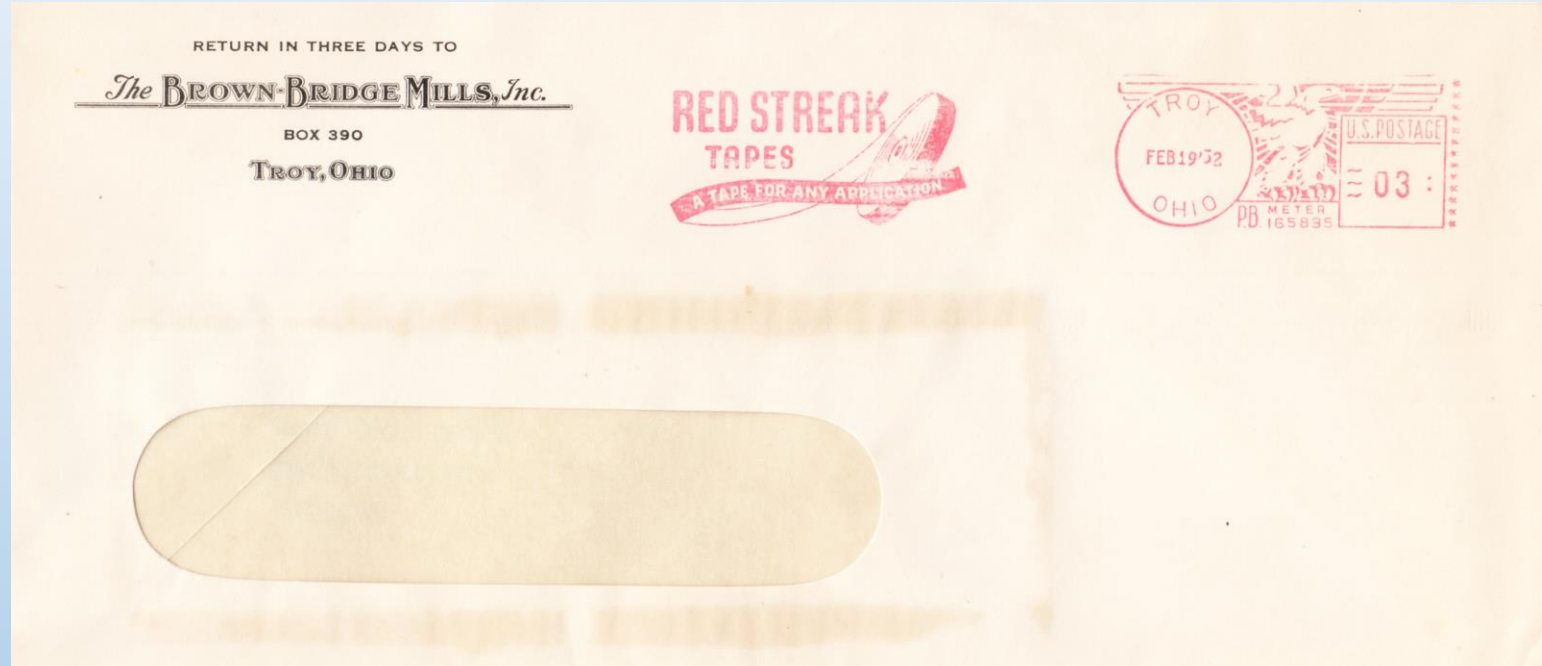
VII- Pot Luck cut though all _____

- *burdensome rigid regulations*



VII- Pot Luck cut though all the red tape

- *burdensome rigid regulations*



Legal documents were once bound and secured with red ribbon, later to be cut to access them. Now refers to a lengthy bureaucratic process.

VII- Pot Luck the handwriting's _____

- *warning of danger or trouble*



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VII- Pot Luck the handwriting's on the wall

- *warning of danger or trouble*



From the Bible's Old Testament. The story is told of the King of Babylon seeing a mysterious message on the wall. Daniel translates it to read that the kingdom will soon be conquered. The prophecy came true.

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VII- Pot Luck _____ mightier than the sword

- *words have power*



VII- Pot Luck the pen's mightier than the sword

- *words have power*



First used in the 15th century, as “the pen is worse than the sword.”

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VII- Pot Luck _____ in hand

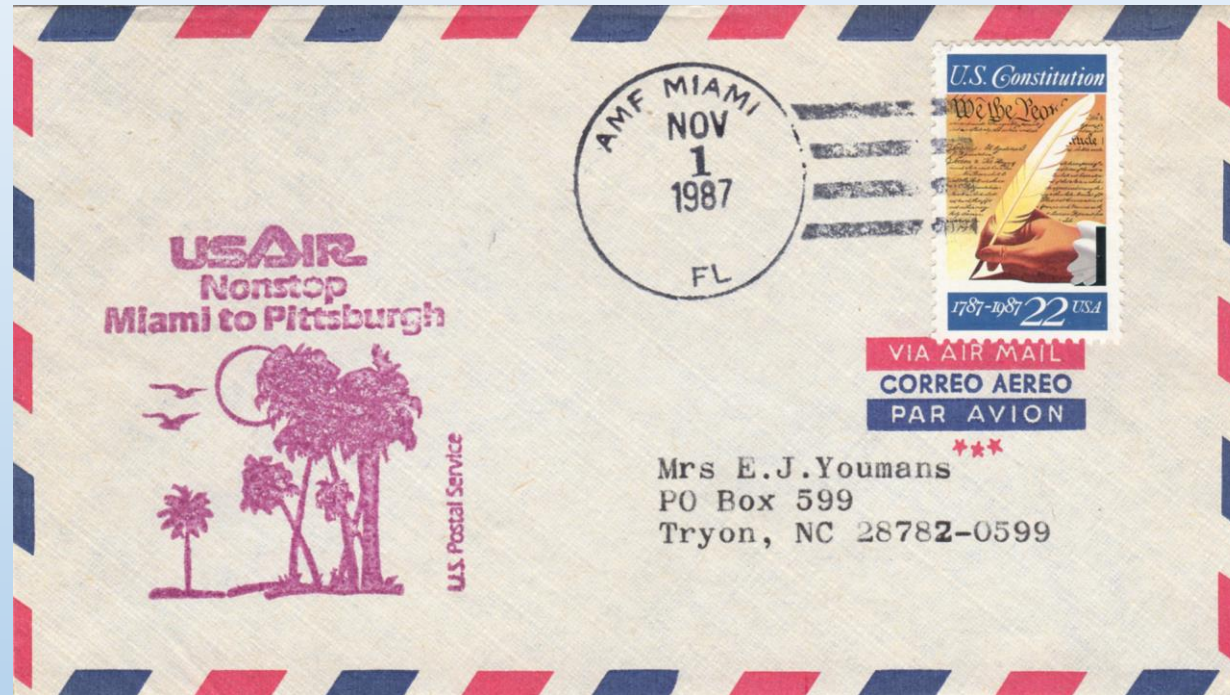
- *to write*



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VII- Pot Luck **take pen** in hand

- *to write*



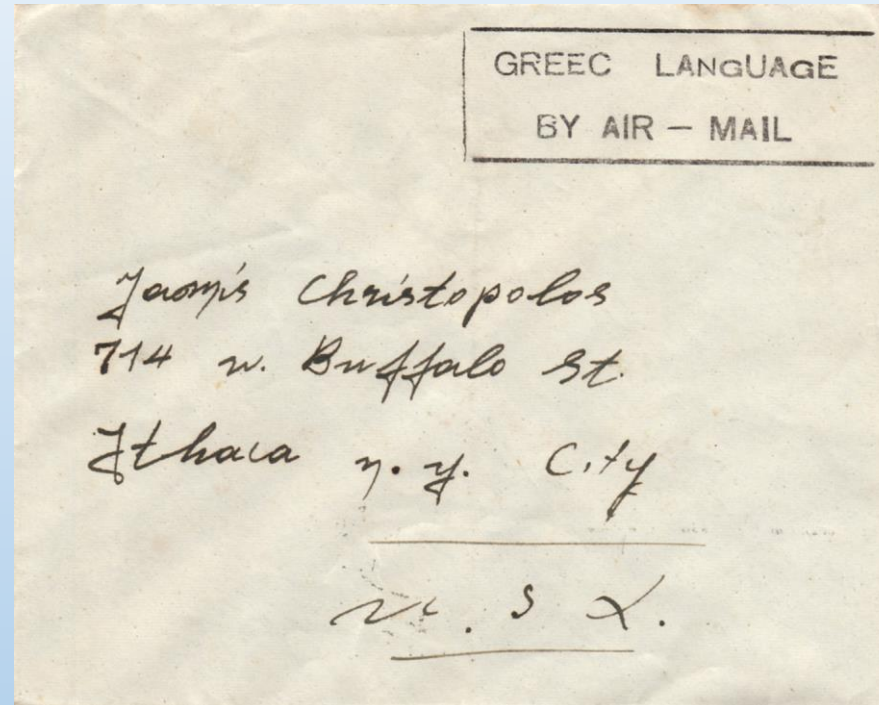
Penned by James Boswell when quoting Samuel Johnson, “No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had.”

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VII- Pot Luck _____ to me

- *incomprehensible*

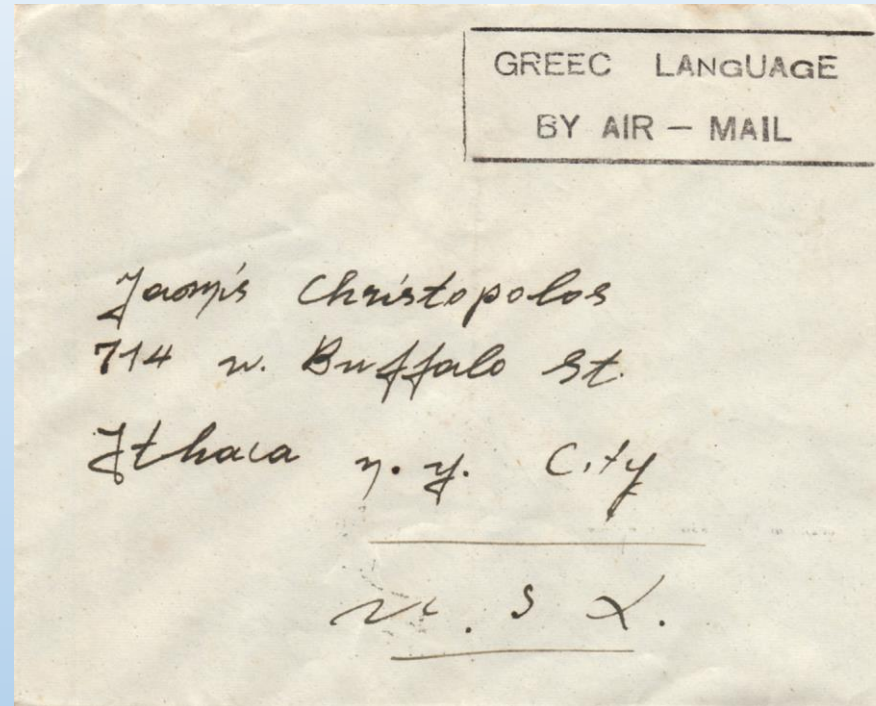
1200 drachma
postage on reverse,
cancelled July 1,
1947. Notice
spelling error
"GREEC".



VII- Pot Luck it's Greek to me

- *incomprehensible*

1200 drachma
postage on reverse,
cancelled July 1,
1947. Notice
spelling error
"GREEC".



Used around the time of Shakespeare, and found in *Julius Caesar*, "Those that understood him smiled at one another and shook their heads, but for mine own part, it was Greek to me."

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VII- Pot Luck deal

- *fair agreement*



VII- Pot Luck **square** deal

- *fair agreement*

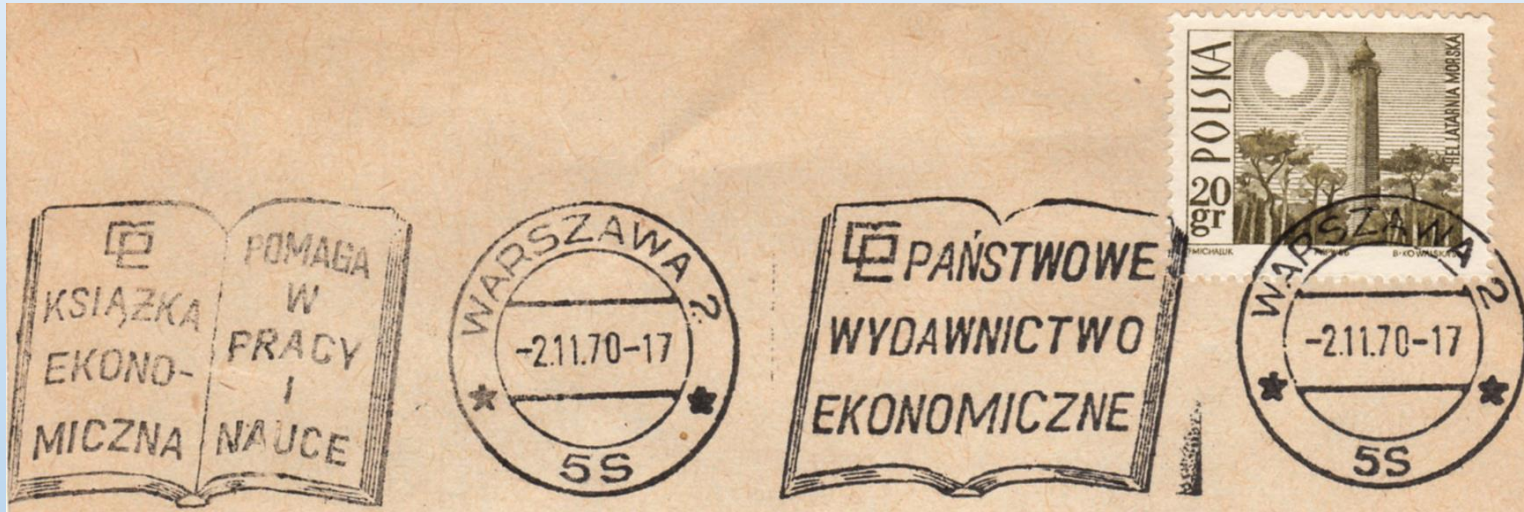


From 1633, in Gerard's *Description of Somerset*. Made popular by Theodore Roosevelt, who made it a campaign slogan.

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VII- Pot Luck by _____

- *adhering to rules*



VII- Pot Luck by the book

- *adhering to rules*



Known since Shakespeare's time, who wrote in *Romeo and Juliet*, "You kiss by the book."

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VII- Pot Luck hit _____

- *get studying*

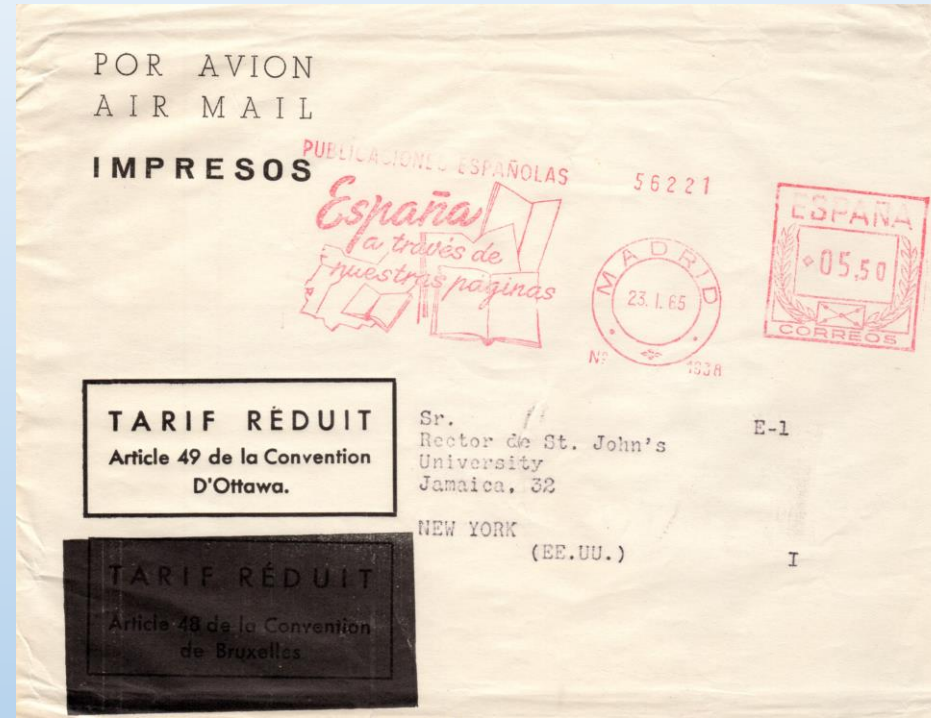
*Article 49 of the
UPU Ottawa
Convention deals
with postal rates,
including printed
matter reduced
rates as here*



VII- Pot Luck hit the books

- *get studying*

Article 49 of the UPU Ottawa Convention deals with postal rates, including printed matter reduced rates as here



20th century American saying of unknown origin.

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VII- Pot Luck _____ of all trades

- *handy person*



VII- Pot Luck **jack** of all trades

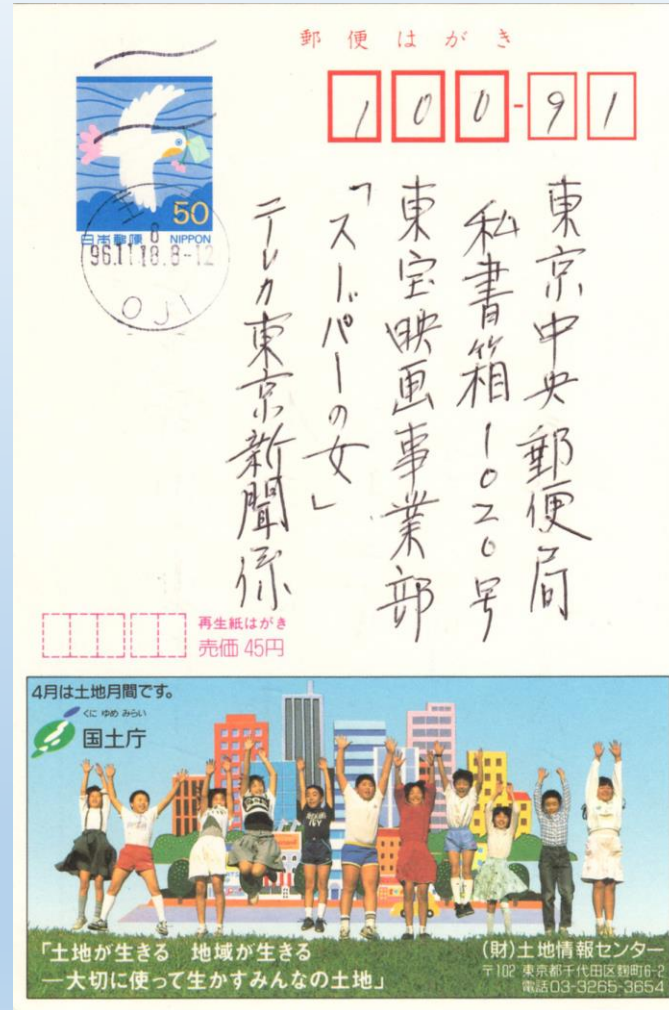
- *handy person*



Known since the 17th century. A “jack” was the nickname for a trade laborer.

VII- Pot Luck _____ for joy

- *extreme happiness*



VII- Pot Luck **jump** for joy

- *extreme happiness*

Unknown origin.



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VII- Pot Luck labor of _____

- *act from the heart*



VII- Pot Luck labor of love

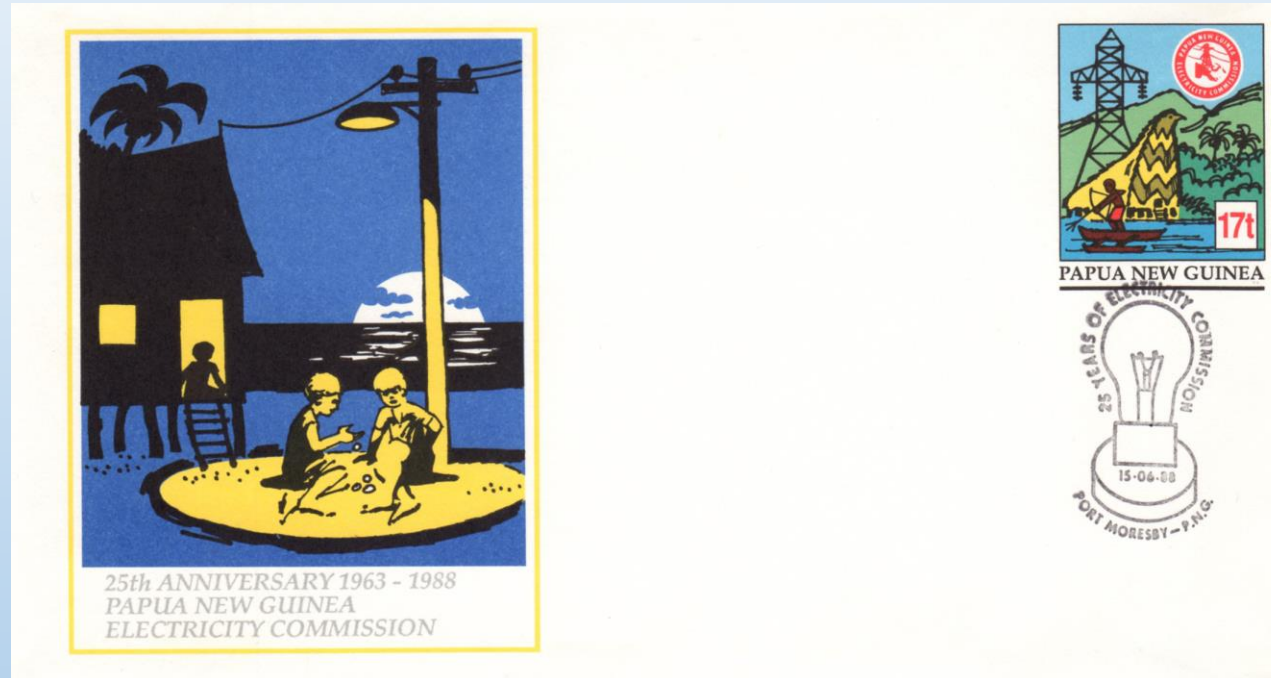
- *act from the heart*



From the Bible, Saint Paul (1 Thessalonians 2-3), “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope...”

VII- Pot Luck _____ the end of the tunnel

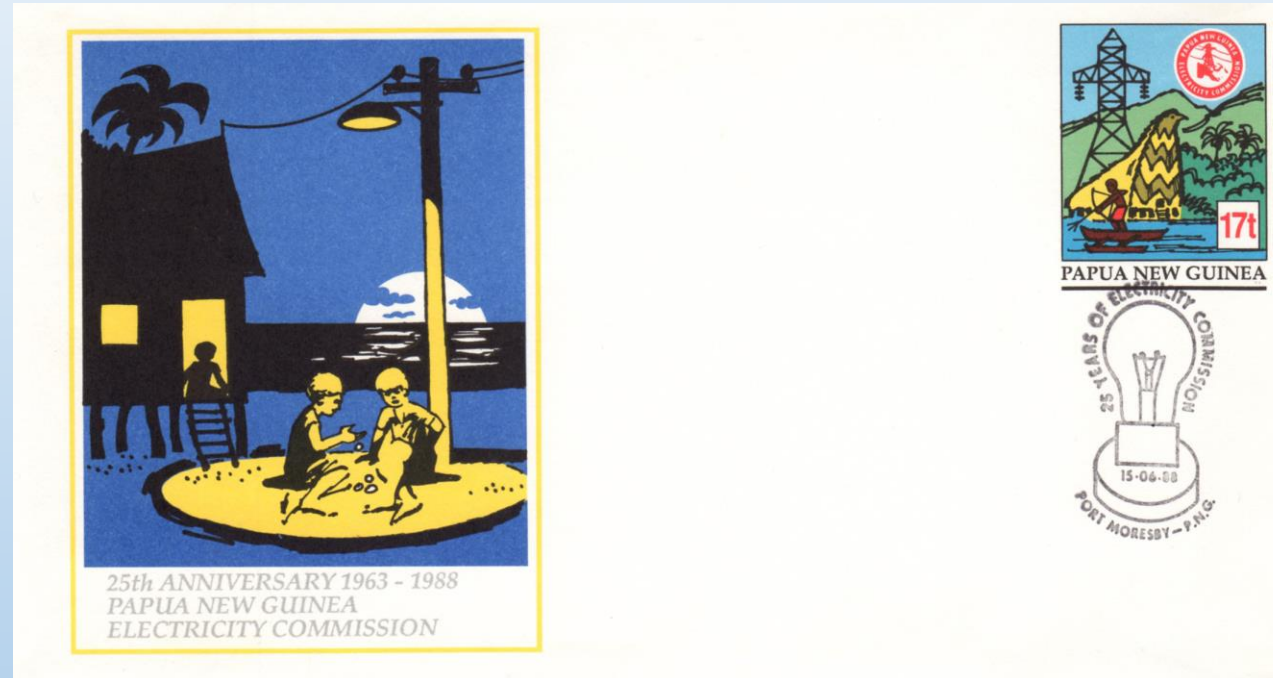
- *hope for a conclusion*



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VII- Pot Luck **light at** the end of the tunnel

- *hope for a conclusion*



Believed to be a 19th century American expression, possibly derived from the railroads which travel through many tunnels “blind.”

I hope you've enjoyed this look at idioms and will take the time to appreciate them more fully the next time you hear one, because... is worth a thousand words!



This is the end of Part VII- Pot Luck.

If you liked this presentation,
try one of the other parts!

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exhibit online at:

<http://www.rpastamps.org/presentations>